

[Charley Banks]

[?]

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WPA L. C. PROJECT Writers' UNIT

Folklore Collection (or Type)

Title Chicago folkstuff. [Begin]: "It's been so long since..."

Library of Congress

Place of origin Chicago Ill. Date 4/14/39

Project worker Garnett L. Eskew

Project editor

Remarks

W3636

Forms to be Filled out for Each Interview

CHICAGO FOLKSTUFF

FORM A

Circumstances of Interview [?]

FOLKLORE

CHICAGO

May 26 1939

STATE Illinois

NAME OF WORKER Garnett L. Eskew

ADDRESS 4700 Kenwood Avenue

DATE April 14, 15, 1939

SUBJECT Folklore

Library of Congress

1. Date and time of interview - Called twice before I found him in - April 12th and 13th.
2. Place of interview - Home of informant - 6419 South Ada Street
3. Name and address of informant - Charley Banks, (colored); 6149 South Ada Street
4. Name and address of person, if any, who put you in touch with informant. -

Mrs. Noel Collins (colored) Evangelist

5. Name and address of person, if any, accompanying you
6. Description of room, house, surroundings, etc.

A small three story frame house next a Methodist Church (colored). One family occupies each floor. It is a typical south side negro neighborhood - rather dreary street and many small houses bordering it on each side; garages and small corner stores operated by negroes. Banks' quarters are on the third floor - crowded but neat little three-room apartment with apparently no modern conveniences. He lives at the home of a colored widow, his own wife being dead. It was late afternoon when I talked with Banks. He had come home from his near-by junkshop and was waiting for his landlady to fix supper.

FORM B

Personal History of Informant

CHICAGO FOLKSTUFF

FOLKLORE

CHICAGO

STATE Illinois

Library of Congress

NAME OF WORKER Garnett L. Eskew

ADDRESS 4700 Kenwood Avenue

DATE April 14, 1939

SUBJECT Folklore

NAME OF INFORMANT Charley Banks

1. Ancestry - African, apparently undiluted. Family (so far as Banks knows lived in Mississippi, near Vicksburg) for more than a hundred years. His parents were slaves.

2. Place and date of birth -

Vicksburg (nearby), in 1880. He is now 59 years old.

3. Family -

Lives alone. Wife dead. Children (so far as he knows) married and living around.

4. Places lived in, with dates -

Reared on a plantation near Vicksburg and from age of 12 chopped and picked cotton. Says he was a better chopper than picker. Worked for a year or two (uncertain) as to how long) on the side-wheel (steamer Alice B. Miller.

5. Education, with dates

A little at country schools.

6. Occupations and accomplishments, with dates -

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Worked for a year or two on the sidewheel Steamer Alice B. Miller running from the Mississippi up the Yazoo; owned a 25-acre farm and raised cotton; later was a section hand on I.C. Came to Chicago 25 years ago.

7. Special skills and interests-

Excellent cotton chopper; section foreman; junkman.

8. Community and religious activities -

Attends a Methodist church.

9. Description of informant -

A rather small black man, with round bright eyes. A soft slur in voice that Chicago cannot eradicate. Likes to reminisce. Memory, apparently, faulty at times.

10. Other Points gained in interview

FORM C

Text of Interview (Unedited)

CHICAGO FOLKSTUFF

FOLKLORE

CHICAGO

STATE Illinois

NAME OF WORKER Garnett L. Eskew

Library of Congress

ADDRESS 4700 Kenwood Avenue

DATE April 14, 1939

SUBJECT Folklore

NAME OF INFORMANT Charley Banks

"It's been so long since I was there that I've done fergit. Shorely, I uster sing Coonjine songs when I worked on de Alaice B. Miller. I was a roustabout and could roll a bale of cotton 500 pounds up the stageplank just as easy! I couldn't do that now! Too old! They was lots of steamboats running on the river and they all did big business. Ise see de ole Alice Miller come out of Yazoo River with 800 bales of cotton and 3000 sacks of cotton seed and a lot of passengers on board . . . No, suh, I don't remember none of those river songs, but we surely uster to sing them. First time I roused my laigs was so sore in the back that I had to stop fer a week. After that it was all right. Fore long, Mister Jim Lusk (he was the mate) take me off hill-work and put me on de nead line."

"I save up enough money to git me a little farm and married me a woman. We done right well wid de cotton. I am a pretty good picker and so was my wife, and we thought we was all right till boll weevils come and eat up all de cotton."

"Then I got me a job with the section gang on Y & MV (that's part of the Illinois Central now). Pretty soon I gits to be section boss, and me and my wife come on up to Chicago, and I been here ever since.

FORM D

Extra Comment

CHICAGO FOLKSTUFF

Library of Congress

FOLKLORE

CHICAGO

STATE Illinois

NAME OF WORKER Garnett L. Eskew

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DATE April 14, 1939

SUBJECT Folklore

NAME OF INFORMANT Charley Banks

I work first at one thing and den at another. When ever I could git work I was on de section gang at the I. C. But now dey aint any jobs and lse too old. So I just keep my little junk shop and git along de bes way I kin. Dat's de onliest thing a man kin do. An' trus'in Gawd."

"I bin wantin' to go back down in Vicksburg and see all dem ole places again. Next time you go down why don't you carry me 'long wid you?"

"Junk business pretty dull now. I picks up all the junk I kin find and sells it again. Sometimes I makes ten dollars a week."